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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: ELECTORAL CODE OF CONDUCT DE-ESCALATES TENSION

REF: A. BAGHAD 433  
[B](#). SIDEREAS - NEA I EMAIL  
[C](#). BAGHDAD 436

Classified By: Political Counselor Yuri Kim for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)  
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[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: In the wake of a February 16 press statement by the UN Security Council Presidency calling on the GOI and Iraqi political actors to conduct national elections in a transparent, inclusive and legitimate manner, the five major political coalitions (PM Maliki's State of Law Alliance, the Iraqi National Alliance, Iraqiyya, the Coalition of Iraq's Unity, and the Kurdish Alliance) signed an electoral code of conduct (Tawafuq decided to take the code back for review). The coalitions pledged to ensure a sound environment for March 7 national elections by refraining from misusing state resources during the campaign and inciting sectarian or ethnic tensions, and promising to accept the results of the election. While this is a welcome development in a highly charged campaign environment, there has been little media and public attention to the code of conduct as of February 18. Many key contacts on the campaign trail reported to poloffs February 17 and 18 that they were unaware that their coalitions were meeting to negotiate the agreement. Somewhat predictably, it appears that reaction to the electoral code varies along Sunni-Shi'a lines. ISCI Chairman Ammar al-Hakim told CDA that the electoral code was a necessary step to de-escalate the tension built up after the de-Ba'athification crisis, but Tawafuq coalition chief Osama al-Tikriti worried that it was an election ploy rather than a genuine consensus agreement. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

[1](#)2. (C) Following UNAMI SRSG Ad Melkert's February 16 report to the UN Security Council, the UNSC President delivered a press statement calling on the GOI and Iraqi political actors to conduct the March 7 elections in a transparent, inclusive and legitimate manner. Public reaction to the statement was not immediately apparent, and the Iraqi press devoted little coverage to it. Saleh al-Mutlaq (head of IFND party), excluded from the candidate list on de-Ba'athification grounds, at first told PolCouns February 16 that the statement was insufficient, but later acknowledged that it was a significant development. PolCouns stressed the importance of the UNSC statement as a good tool for forcing the Iraqi courts to explain their actions. It also demonstrated to the Iraqi public and political entities that the UN intended to watch the elections process carefully. She assured Damluji that the Embassy was pressing very hard to rein in the negative cycle of de-Ba'athification and sectarianism.

[1](#)3. (C) On February 17, DPM Rafi'e al-Issawi confirmed to PolCouns that leading representatives of five of the major Iraqi political coalitions (PM Maliki's chief of staff Tariq Abdullah signed for State of Law Alliance/SLA, Ibrahim Ja'afari's ally and National Reform Trend bloc leader Falih al-Fayahd for the Iraqi National Alliance/INA, DPM Issawi for Iraqiyya, Minister of Interior Jawad al-Bolani for the Coalition of Iraq's Unity/CIU, and DPM Rowsch Shaways for the

Kurdish Alliance) had agreed to an electoral code of conduct.

The IIP's Selim al-Jebouri attended the meeting but took the electoral code back to headquarters for review. PMO advisor Abdullah Emir told poloff during the negotiation that the proposed code bore no relation to the draft legislation proposed by the Presidency Council in October 2009, that that party leaders wanted to develop a code of honor to prevent sectarianism and slander. The signatories committed therein to refrain from the misuse of state resources during the campaign, from inciting sectarian or ethnic tensions, promised to accept the results of the election and respect the principles of a peaceful transfer of power, and agreed to set up a committee to monitor adherence (refs A-B). Many political contacts were unaware of negotiations for an electoral code of conduct on February 17 or were unreachable on the campaign trail; INA MP Qassim Daoud, Da'wa MP Sami al-Askary and Iraqiyya's Damluji told poloffs they had no idea an agreement had been reached.

14. (C) Reaction to the electoral code varied somewhat predictably along Shi'a - Sunni lines: ISCI Chairman Ammar al-Hakim told CDA on February 17 that the agreement was a necessary step to de-escalate tensions after the de-Ba'athification crisis (ref C). VP Hashimi's advisor Krikor der-Hagopian told poloff that it was a step in the right direction, but observed that the agreement might not be enforceable. He wondered if blocs would abide by the agreement, and whether the stated enforcement mechanism of a "follow-up committee" would be adequate. Osama Tikriti (IIP chief and head of the Tawafuq bloc) told poloff February 18 that he liked the idea of the code in principle, but worried that some parties (implying the Iraqiyya coalition, which floated the idea of an electoral code in a February 13 statement) were using it for political gain. Tikriti observed that the "parties that most need to abide by a code of behavior, like the Sadrist Trend and ISCI" were not present during negotiations.

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